

Freedom of Expression

Students shall enjoy the privilege of free verbal and written expression providing such expression is consistent with the mission and values of the School District and does not disrupt the operation of the school. The principal shall have the authority to monitor student verbal and written expression. Students who violate the standards for verbal and written expression shall be subject to corrective action or punishment.

For purposes of verbal and written expression, the following guidelines are in effect:

A. Distribution of written materials or presentation of an oral speech in an assembly or classroom setting may be restricted:

1. Where there is evidence which reasonably supports a forecast that the expression is likely to cause disruption of, or interference with, school activities, which disruption or interference cannot be prevented by reasonably available, less restrictive means; or,
2. Where such expression unduly impinges upon the rights of others.

In order for a student publication or speech to be deemed disruptive, it must be reasonable to forecast material disruption to normal school activity if the material were published and distributed. Disruption includes, but is not limited to: student riots; destruction of property; widespread shouting, or boisterous conduct; or substantial student participation in a school boycott, sit-in, stand-in, walk-out or other related form of activity, fighting or other aggressive activity, or any other interference with teaching or learning activities.

B. Distribution of written material or presentation of an oral speech which are construed to be unsuitable for minors shall not be permitted. Rules for determining unsuitability for minors should be consistent with those as applied to instructional materials.

C. Libelous material or speech may be prohibited. Libelous material shall be defined to include defamatory falsehoods about public figures or governmental officials. In order to be libelous, the defamatory falsehood must be made with actual malice; that is, with knowledge that it is false, or with reckless disregard of whether it was false or not.

D. Material may be considered profane when the language does not meet the standards of professional journalism. Sanctions may be imposed on a student when he/she engages in offensive "lewd and indecent speech."

E. Publications may not "invade the privacy" of individuals. Such occurrences may include: exploitation of one's personality; publications of one's private affairs; wrongful intrusion into one's private activities in a manner that can cause mental or emotional suffering, shame, humiliation or embarrassment to a reasonable person of ordinary sensibilities.

F. Publications or oral speeches, which criticize school officials or advocate violation of school rules may be prohibited when there is evidence which supports a forecast that substantial disruption of school may develop.

G. Publications or oral speeches, which advocate racial, religious, or ethnic prejudice or discrimination or seriously disparage particular racial, religious, or ethnic groups, are prohibited.

Student Publications

The student publications instructor or advisor shall have the primary responsibility for supervising student publications and to see that provisions of the School District's policy and procedures are met. The instructor/advisor will provide the high school principal with a copy of the newspaper three (3) school days before it is to be published for the principal's review. Pending the review or appeal regarding any article, the questionable article will be deleted from the newspaper until a final decision is made. Any dispute that cannot be resolved at the building level shall be submitted to the superintendent for further consideration. When appropriate, the superintendent shall seek legal counsel. If the complaint cannot be resolved at that level, the board, upon request, shall consider the complaint at its next regular meeting. The board's decision shall be final and binding.

The district believes that students should be encouraged to exercise good judgment in the content of the student publication program, such expressive writing must be in keeping with the school's instructional mission and values. Material must be free of content that: runs counter to the instructional program; invades the privacy of individuals (see *page 1 Section E*); demeans or otherwise damages individuals or groups; supports or encourages the violation of school rules or, is inappropriate for the maturity level of students. Such publication activities must be respectful of others and foster standards of civility while exercising responsible journalism. The final decision regarding the appropriateness of articles for inclusion in student publications rests with the instructor, the administrator and ultimately the School Board.

Editorial Statement in the Student Newspaper

The student newspaper (i.e., Eye of the Tiger) is intended to provide students the opportunity to learn journalistic skills. The student newspaper is a non-public forum created by the journalism class for educational, informational, and entertainment purposes. As a publication of Ephrata School District (partly supported by the ASB), the student newspaper will strive to uphold the elements of responsible journalism. Information may show a variety of student viewpoints through editorials and letters to the editor.

The editorial statement shall be published under the Editorial Policy heading in each edition.

Distribution Of Materials

Students' constitutional rights of freedom of speech or expression provide for the opportunity to distribute written materials on school premises. However, distribution of materials by students shall not cause disruption of or interference with school activities. Systematic distribution of materials may not occur during instructional time, unless other similar non-instructional activities are permitted. Students will be subject to corrective action or punishment, including suspension or expulsion, depending on the nature of the disruption or interference resulting from distribution of materials.